

International English and English-Chinese Dictionaries

Introduction

The Need for the Present Study

The geographical spread of the English language today has resulted in international variation in the use of standard English. Therefore, the terms “International English” and “English as an International Language” seem to have been on many people’s lips recently to refer to the varieties of English spoken in different parts of the world (N. J. ROSS, ET 50, 29). An international picture of the English language regularly emerges from the pages of linguistic books or journals. Almost every book on the history of the English language is now likely to have at least one chapter dedicated to the international role of English. International English has become a dictionary and an encyclopaedia entry, a topic discussed at seminars and conferences.

Whatever definition we choose to define these terms, no one would disagree that English plays a major international role in the world today. The number of English learners worldwide soars every

year. Faced with so many varieties of English such as American English, British English, Australian English, Canadian English or even Singaporean English, the ordinary learners who learn English as a second language may probably be puzzled. They may ask such questions as: “What kind of English variety should I study?” “Is there any standard type of English?”

In this coming dissertation, my focus will be on the following questions: Should a dictionary include all the English varieties in its limited volume? How should a dictionary balance all the different varieties? In what depth should a dictionary describe each major variety? Though these questions are of equal importance to both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, our discussions from the practical point of view will be confined only to the bilingual area.

The Practical Value of the Present Study

In this paper the discussions will centre on how an English-Chinese dictionary can obtain both a balanced inclusion and full treatment of the two major English varieties, that is, British English and American English in its scope.

My choice of this topic derives from the following observations:

1. It is a recent development in English lexicographic world that the general-purpose dictionaries published in Britain and the USA tend to be more and more hospitable to regionalisms, i.e., different varieties of English in different parts of the world. Since this is a relatively new trend, not so much systematic work has so far been done to address this problem fully, therefore, my work is a humble contribution to the full treatment of this problem in the future.

2. Most efforts made now to address this problem are directed towards the monolingual lexicography.

3. Chinese bilingual dictionaries have a long tradition of including both British and American varieties in their scopes, but this practice is to a great extent an inadequate one. What I am doing here is to try to bring this problem to the bilingual lexicographer's attention when they start to compile English-Chinese dictionaries.

4. Another point of the study is to set up several principles for English-Chinese dictionary compilers to follow.

The Scope and Arrangement of the Present Study

In this paper my focus is on the treatment of two prominent national varieties of English — British English and American English — in English- Chinese dictionaries. Hereafter British English and American English will contract to BE and AE respectively.

This paper is to be divided into six parts. In the Introduction several words are said to show the need for and value of the present study.

In Chapter One the attempt is made to obtain the necessary historical orientation of the present study, particularly as it relates to recent and current linguistic scenes all over the world. Space is also attributed to the discrimination of a few commonly used terms in discussing International English. Then a simplified wheel-like model of International English based on the work of McArthur is provided.

In Chapter Two an all-round comparison between two major English varieties, i.e., BE and AE is made. The comparison occurs at phonological, orthographic, lexical and grammatical levels.

In Chapter Three comparisons have been made between two

different attitudes towards English varieties, that is, the difference between the attitude held by the early English dictionary compilers and that of the latest ones.

In the final chapter major problems that confront Chinese bilingual dictionary compilers in search of for a full treatment of major English varieties in their scopes have been identified and solutions to the problems have been offered.

The conclusion comes that inadequate treatment of AE in English-Chinese dictionaries is to be deplored. More efforts should be made to seek for a full treatment of AE in their scopes.

Chapter One

The Sign of International English

1.1 The Sign of International English

As English is becoming the most widely taught and read language that the world has ever known, many terms for example: “International English,” “World Englishes,” “English Varieties,” “English Languages,” and “English Dialects” seem to have been on many people’s lips recently to refer to the varieties of English spoken in different parts of the world. These terms indicate that the different kinds or varieties of the same language , that is, English now assume to have an independent linguistic status.

McCrum, Cram & MacNeil (ET 50,1992, Vol.13 No. 2, 30) pointed out that: “English at the end of the twentieth century is more widely scattered, more widely spoken and written than any other language has ever been, it has become the language of the planet, the first truly global language. ”

If we ask ourselves why English is so widely dispersed geographically. The answer lies partially in its historical grounds.

Kachru (1992 d) owed the global spread of English to two diasporas. The first one involved migrations of substantial numbers of English speakers from the present British Isles to, for example, Australia, New Zealand, and North America. As time goes on, the language in those new regions changed, and became quite distinct from the language “ at home,” winning a status of national varieties of English.

The second diaspora of English is by means of colonization, i.e., the transportation of English by imposing it as a colonial language on non-English speakers.

Leaving aside the historical grounds, Roger Lass stated: the development of “world language” status is not a linguistic phenomenon, it is a cultural, and more basically a political and economic one (ET 50, Vol. 13 No. 2).

1.1.1 The Concentric Circles Model of International English

The uses and users of English internationally have been discussed profitably in terms of three concentric circles, a model proposed by B.B. Kachru (1991). Briefly, the circles model captures

the global situation of English in the following way.

The Inner Circle comprises the old-variety English-using countries, where English is the first or dominant language: the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. In these countries, though other languages surely are spoken, English plays a controlling part there.

The Outer Circle comprises countries where English has a long history of institutionalized functions and standing as a language of wide and important roles in education, governance, literary creativity, and popular culture, such as India, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, South Africa, and Zambia. India has the third largest English-using population in the world, after the United States and Britain, and Nigeria and the Philippines closely follow India.

The Expanding Circle countries are those in which English has various roles and is widely studied but for more specific purposes than in the Outer Circle, including (but certainly not limited to) reading knowledge for scientific and technical purposes, such countries currently include China, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Korea, and Nepal. However, it must be remembered that languages have life

cycles, particularly in multilingual societies, and thus the status of a language is not necessarily permanent.

1.1.2 The Challenge of the Unitary View on English

English is traditionally seen as one and indivisible (T. McArthur, ET, Vol. 8 No. 4 October 1992). A historical frame of reference developed in the 19th century divides English —the single great slab —into three stages or phases: Old English, Middle English and Modern English. These three stages, according to Tom McArthur, make the basic three-phase chronological model of English and have a box-like or ladder-like aspect, as in Figure 1.

| |
|-----------------------------------|
| ... |
| OLD ENGLISH C.500 --- 1050 |
| MIDDLE ENGLISH C.1050 --- 1450 |
| MODERN ENGLISH C.1450 --- |
| ... |

Figure 1. The Basic Three-Phase Chronological Model of

English

A crucial difference between the first two stages and the last one is that Old English and Middle English are all over and done with, whereas Modern English is not. Modern English is further divided into two such phases: Early Modern English and Late Modern English. The former has come to an end, the latter, which is usually given the label Modern English again, is once perceived as open-ended and accounts for new developments permanently. But now, many Anglicists appear to be arguing that the modern phase as once conceived as a permanent condition is now over, that some time after the Second World War it was replaced by something new. This novel state has since the 1960s been called World English or International English, and since the 1980s has also been called World Englishes (T. McArthur, Vol. 8 No. 4, October 1992, 14). McArthur proposed a five-in-one variant of the old chronological model, as in Figure 2.

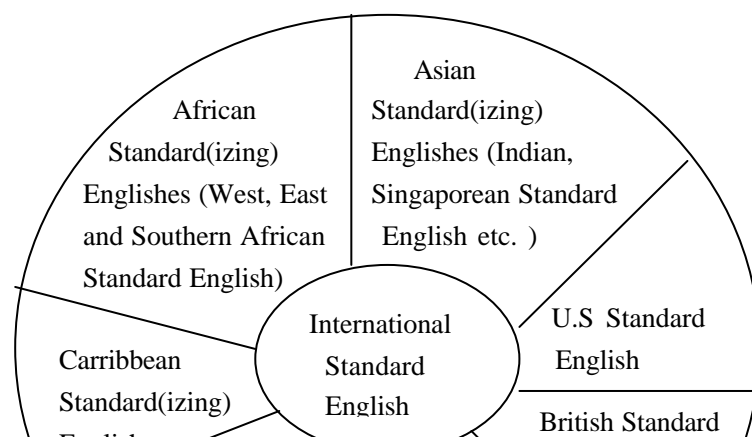
| |
|---|
| ... |
| OLD ENGLISH C.500 --- 1050 |
| MIDDLE ENGLISH C.1050 --- 1450 |
| EARLY MODERN PAGE 10 ENGLISH C.1450 --- 1700 |

Figure 2. The Five-Phase Variant of the Old Model (proposed by T. McArthur ET, Vol. 8 No. 4, October 1992, 14)

1.1.3 A Simplified Wheel-Like Model of International English

The approach in this paper to deal with International English is to divide it into seven main standard branches illustrated in a simplified wheel-like model modified on the basis of McArthur's wheel with a hub model proposed in 1987. See Figure 3

See Figure 3.



**Figure 3. A Simplified Model of International English
Modified on the Basis of the Work of McArthur**

There is a strange point here, both the concentric circles model of International English and McArthur's wheel-like model do not include Europe, where English is widely used and the teaching of English as a second language is prosperous, as one of its members. It is hard to say whether it is a mistake or a deliberate omission.

Commonly accepted varieties of English today include American and British English, of course, and also Australian, Canadian and New Zealand English. No one would argue with the first two. The last three might cause some controversy in certain quarters (Kachru and Nelson, 1996,71).

1.2 The Discrimination of Some Terms

1.2.1 Standard English

The American Heritage Dictionary (third edition) defines Standard English as the variety of English that is most widely accepted as the spoken and written language of educated speakers in formal and informal contexts and is characterized by generally accepted conventions of spelling, grammar and vocabulary while admitting some regional differences, especially in pronunciation and vocabulary.

Chambers Encyclopaedic English Dictionary refers it as: the form of English taught in school, and used especially in formal situations, by the majority of educated English speakers.

Two things are of special importance here, one is that it is the kind of English that is expected to be spoken by the majority of educated English speakers. The other is that the spelling, grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary of standard English should be conventional.

In this paper, when we talk about varieties of English we refer to the national standard form, excluding all the sub-national semi-standards such as Black English Vernacular or Indian English, or any other standardizing forms.

1.2.2 Varieties of English Around the World

According to the Oxford Companion to the English Language (1992), variety is a term in socio-linguistics for a distinct form of a language. Varieties fall into two types: (1) user-related varieties, associated with particular people and often places, such as Black English (English as used by blacks, however defined and whatever located, but especially African-Americans in the US) and Canadian English (English as used in Canada: either all such English or only the standard form). (2) use-related varieties, associated with function, such as legal English (the language of courts, contracts, etc.) and literary English (the typical usage of literary texts, conversations, etc.). Here in this paper, when referring to varieties of English, we use it in its first sense, referring to the different kinds of standard Englishes dispersed geographically all over the world.

1.2.3 International English

There is a wide diversity of terms used to refer to the varieties of English spoken in different parts of the world, some seem sound and some ambiguous. The terms we usually encounter are “International English,” “English as an International Language,” “English Varieties,” “English Dialects,” “World Englishes,” and “English Languages,” etc. Among these, “International English” seems to me a label better suited to describe the different varieties.

Alternatively, “International English” may designate a form of English which, although not actually spoken by anyone, provides the common core to all the world’s varieties of English. More usually, however, the expression indicates the kind of English used by native and/or non-native speakers of English as a lingua franca for communicating basic information in a simple manner, often in the business environment, but also in international airports, popular tourist resorts and so on. Though hardly so simple, “International English” can also describe the English used by groups of people such as the scientific community at an international level (N. J. Ross, ET 50, Vol.13 No.2 April 1997). In this paper International English refers to the varieties of English spoken in different parts of the world.

When referring to English varieties, I try to avoid the term “English Dialects.” Today, the interpretation of “dialect” is multidimensional. It takes into account all variations arising from differences among users, namely, the space, the temporal factor and the social distance (胡壮麟等, 1988). Any speaker can be said to speak various dialects, depending on the circumstances of a discussion. In terms of geography, one can speak Southern American English; in terms of profession and education, one can speak social dialects. Furthermore, in some speaker’s minds the term dialect has acquired various sorts of stigmatized baggage over the years. To say that people speak a dialect implies that they are provincial, perhaps not well educated. However, because of these negative associations, most people nowadays —especially in the United States —use variety as a euphemistic term for dialect.

“English Languages” is a very bold term implying the existence of a new language family. On linguistic grounds, the label “English Languages” seems more open to criticism. The term emphasizes the differences between all English varieties, assuming that some varieties are becoming unintelligible to readers who speak standard English, though the linguistic scenes in some regions are

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